Unit .02

Session .03

God Provides for His Promise

Scripture

Genesis 24:12-19, 23-27,63-67

12 "Lord, God of my master Abraham," he prayed, "make this happen for me today, and show kindness to my master Abraham. **13** I am standing here at the spring where the daughters of the men of the town are coming out to draw water. **14** Let the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,' and who responds, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also'—let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." **15** Before he had finished speaking, there was Rebekah—daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, the wife of Abraham's brother Nahor—coming with a jug on her shoulder. **16** Now the girl was very beautiful, a virgin—no man had been intimate with her. She went down to the spring, filled her jug, and came up. **17** Then the servant ran to meet her and said, "Please let me have a little water from your jug." **18** She replied, "Drink, my lord." She quickly lowered her jug to her hand and gave him a drink. **19** When she had finished giving him a drink, she said, "I'll also draw water for your camels until they have had enough to drink." … **23** "Whose daughter are you?" he asked. "Please tell me, is there room in your father's house for us to spend the night?" **24** She answered him, "I am the daughter of Bethuel son of Milcah, whom she bore to Nahor." **25** She also said to him, "We have plenty of straw and feed and a place to spend the night." **26** Then the man knelt low, worshiped the Lord, **27** and said, "Blessed be the Lord, the God of my master Abraham, who has not withheld his kindness and faithfulness from my master. As for me, the Lord has led me on the journey to the house of my master's relatives." … **63** In the early evening Isaac went out to walk in the field, and looking up he saw camels coming. **64** Rebekah looked up, and when she saw Isaac, she got down from her camel **65** and asked the servant, "Who is that man in the field coming to meet us?" The servant answered, "It is my master." So she took her veil and covered herself. **66** Then the servant told Isaac everything he had done. **67** And Isaac brought her into the tent of his mother Sarah and took Rebekah to be his wife. Isaac loved her, and he was comforted after his mother's death.

Intro Options

Main Point:
God works providentially to bring about His purposes.

Option 1

Tell students to work in pairs for this activity, and give each student a piece of paper and pen or pencil. Instruct students to sit back-to-back, facing away from their partners. One partner will draw something simple. Then, without showing the other person, the artist will instruct him or her to make the same drawing, while not using specific names. For example, students can't just say "Draw a face." Instead, they would need to give more steps, like "draw a circle," and "draw a smaller circle bedside it." When students finish their drawings, they should compare them. If time allows, the partners may switch roles in the activity. When students complete the activity, ask:

- **What kinds of clues were most helpful to you as you drew?**
- **Was this task easy or difficult? Explain.**

Sometimes, we sort of know the end result (i.e. my picture should look like my partners'), but aren't exactly sure what steps to take to get there. And the drawings don't always turn out like we think they will. Abraham knew what God had promised, and he knew what God was asking him to do. However, Abraham didn't know how God would work those two things together. Still, he trusted and obeyed, and God provided.

Option 2

Arrange chairs in a circle. Ask students to pretend they are on another planet that doesn't communicate with words like we do. So, they can only "talk" through their actions. The catch is: Four people always have to remain standing, but no one can remain standing for more than 10 seconds at a time. They have to figure out who's standing when and who's sitting when, all without talking. Allow students to play for five to ten minutes, as time allows. Ask:

- **What was it like to try to communicate and make a plan without talking?**
- **Did you ever find yourself completely confused about what was happening?**

It can be difficult to understand what's happening even when we speak the same language as those around us and are able to talk to make plans. But when you can't use words, making a plan can feel a bit like walking through the dark with no light: We just can't see what's going on. God is always working in our lives, whether we can obviously see it or not. He provides a way for us to do what He has called us to do, and will make that way clear to us at just the right time, like he did for Abraham.

TEACHING PLAN

After Abraham's wife, Sarah, died (Gen. 23), Abraham decided it was time for Isaac to marry. The patriarch was concerned that his son marry to continue the promise of God so that they would become a great nation, but he was also concerned about who Isaac married. Abraham believed that if Isaac took a wife from the Canaanite women around them, he might be led away from worshiping the Lord. With this in mind and recognizing his own days were running out, Abraham called for his most trusted servant to return to the land Abraham was from to find a wife for Isaac. (See Gen. 24:1-9 for fuller context of what took place.)

Abraham's servant swore an oath that he would complete his assignment as he had been instructed and then took ten camels loaded with goods and traveled to Aram-naharaim, Nahor's town. He arrived at a well in the evening when women went to draw water and waited. But that is not all he did.

Read Genesis 24:12-19,23-27.

Notice the servant's dependence on God. Yes, Abraham sent him on this assignment, and yes, he swore an oath to Abraham, but this servant knew that this assignment was ultimately in God's hands. God had to "make this happen."

- **Why should we respond to opportunities in our lives with the mind-set that if something is supposed to happen, God has to "make it happen?"**

Before the servant even finished his prayer, God answered it. The servant saw Rebekah coming to the well with a jug on her shoulder. Rebekah was from Abraham's family, and she was very beautiful. The servant ran to meet Rebekah and then asked her for a drink of water. Rebekah complied and gave the servant a drink of water and it wasn't until after she had finished giving him a drink that she offered to water the camels. After Rebekah watered the camels, the servant asked whose daughter she was, and Rebekah responded that she was from Nahor's family and invited the servant to stay with her family. And at this, the servant knelt low and worshiped the Lord, recognizing His kindness to Abraham in answering his prayer.

- **When have you experienced God answering your prayers? What happened? How has that shaped your prayer life today?**

99 Essential Doctrines *(p. 72, DDG)*

The Bride of Christ

The church is described as the bride of Christ, faithfully waiting for the day when Christ will return and heaven and earth will be one. Made up of all believers from all tongues and nations, the church is the bride that Christ redeemed. The picture of a bride also speaks to the permanence of Christ's relationship with the church, for marriage was intended by God to be a lasting covenant between a man and a woman (Gen. 2:24; Matt. 19:5).

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God works providentially to bring about His purposes.

Genesis 24:12-19,23-27

12-14. Notice what the servant was appealing to in his prayer. He was not asking God to make it happen for him, or even for Isaac. He was asking God to make it happen to show kindness to Abraham. The servant was appealing to the promises God had made to Abraham to make him a great nation. The servant was calling on God to fulfill the covenant promises He had already made.

This is why he also prayed expectantly, evidenced by the specificity of his prayer. He did not just pray for God to provide, leaving the answer unclear. He prayed that God would provide a woman to answer his request for a drink in a specific way—that she would offer to water his camels too. Ten thirsty camels could drink up to 300 gallons of water. This woman would be offering to haul 2,500 pounds of water for this stranger at the well. In this, we see that the servant had something else in mind—the woman's character. He was asking God to provide a woman, but not any woman—he was asking God to provide a generous and kind woman. The servant was praying with expectancy and wisdom.

Who could write a better story than this one? There was no way Abraham's servant, even with all of his wisdom and creativity, could have orchestrated a better plan for finding Isaac a wife than this one. This illustrates a great truth about why we can expect God's providential work in our lives: none of us can strategize our way into God's favor, blessing, or plan for our lives. We don't find it; God brings us to it and it to us. He is the one at work, often behind the scenes unseen by us, to bring about His purposes in and through us.

10-67. This is the longest continuous passage in Genesis and its quality of narration is striking. Generally, it is one of the classic biblical case studies on seeking to follow God's will. Specifically, it reflects how important it was for the heir of promise to have the right wife and for that marriage to come about according to God's direction.

In Defense *(p. 74, DDG)*

Facts don't interpret themselves. For example, if you were to walk into your first period classroom and see that all of the chairs had been placed neatly on the desks and pushed to the center of the room, then the facts you see before you are just that—the chairs are now on the desks and at the center of the room. But that doesn't explain how they got there or the reason they are there. For these "facts" to make sense, you have to interpret them by giving an explanation. Maybe the chairs were set up this way for the custodians to clean the floors or maybe the teacher—who has done similar things in the past—is planning to do an activity with the class.

The Christian worldview offers the best explanation for the things we see around us. Where some worldviews can only conclude chance or randomness against all odds, the Christian worldview can rightly conclude, like in this text, that God is providentially at work to accomplish His plan in the lives of His people.

TEACHING PLAN

Abraham's servant returned with Rebekah to her family's home and recounted to her father, Bethuel, and her brother, Laban, all that had happened. When they heard the servant's story, they agreed that it was from the Lord and agreed to allow Rebekah to return with him to become Isaac's wife.

Read Genesis 24:63-67.

Abraham's servant returned with Rebekah and she became Isaac's wife. With this marriage, God was arranging for His covenant promises to continue. The son of promise was positioned to provide grandsons of promise, and great grandsons of promise. The family took another step, albeit a modest one, toward becoming a great nation.

- **How can this account remind us that God's work in our lives can be part of a much bigger picture that we may not be able to see at the moment?**

Activity

Prepare by printing several images of everyday items (ex: a basketball), both zoomed-in and zoomed-out. Place the zoomed-in images at the front of the room, give students a pen and sheet of paper, and ask them to identify the object. Then, reveal the zoomed-out photos and allow students to check their answers. The student with the most correct answers wins. This activity will help students see how our lives "zoomed-in" look very different from God's big picture view.

While God's provision of Rebekah to be Isaac's wife seemed to be the perfect choice by God, we will soon learn that it was actually rather unlikely and, from the world's perspective, unwise. Rebekah was barren, which might remind us of the unlikely choice of Isaac over Ishmael before this (Gen. 25:21).

But this serves to remind us that the people God uses and the methods He employs seldom pass the "eye test." God's provision is always perfect; but His people never are. Over and over again in Scripture we encounter this truth. God delights in choosing the unlikely and doing the unexpected so He alone gets the glory. In this early moment of the covenant being fulfilled, we see that God is the One who will need to do the heavy lifting to bring it to pass.

- **Why should we be encouraged to know that God delights in using imperfect people to accomplish His perfect goal?**

But one day, God would work through a perfect person—His Son, Jesus. Jesus was the perfect One to carry out God's perfect plan to provide salvation to the world. It was through Jesus' life of perfect obedience and His perfect sacrifice on the cross that we might be forgiven of our sins and be adopted into God's family. The cross reveals the perfect wisdom of God, even if it appears as foolishness to the world (1 Cor. 1:20-25). And it is the cross we proclaim to the nations as we call on others to trust in Christ and experience the blessings of God's covenant promises.

- **Read Luke 3:23-38 and think about Jesus' family line, and the thousands of people born and marriages leading to His birth. How does this reality highlight God's sovereignty and goodness?**

COMMENTARY

Main Point:
God works providentially to bring about His purposes.

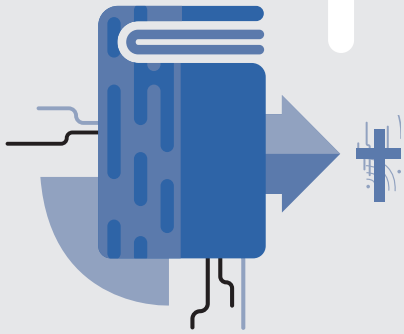
Genesis 24:63-67

24:67. Isaac loved Rebekah and found comfort after his mother's death. We have seen that Abraham was correct; God went ahead of the servant to prepare the way for him to encounter Rebekah. And just as the servant was precise in his prayer to God, God was even more precise in His answer. God did not just provide a wife, He provided a wife whom Isaac loved and who loved him.

In this brief note, we are reminded that God is not practical in His purposes. Yes, He will bring to pass what He desires as He works in us and through us. And yes, God's work in us and through us often transcends our lives; there is often much more at stake than we can see. But this does not mean that we are merely tools to Him. We are people He deeply loves and cares for (Deut. 7:9; Ps. 136:26; Eph. 2:4-5; 1 John 3:1). And in this we can find great comfort. God does not have His gaze fixed solely on the outcome of our situations. He is providentially working toward that, as we see in this account, but He is not only providentially working toward that. He is aware of our fears, our doubts, our sorrows, and our pains. And He is equally aware of our joys, our hopes, our dreams, and our desires. And He cares. God is at work in the "big" story we are part of, but He is also at work in our stories for His glory and our good.

(p. 73, DDG) Christ Connection

God provided Rebekah as a wife for Isaac according to His covenant promise to bless to the world through Abraham's family. In the same way, God provides the church as a bride for His Son to bless the world by sharing about God's plan of salvation through Jesus.



GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PROMISE

Genesis 24:12–19, 23–27, 63–67

GOD PROVIDES FOR HIS PROMISE

God works providentially to bring about His purposes.

JESUS CONNECTION

God provided Rebekah as a wife for Isaac because of His covenant promise to bless to the world through Abraham's family. In the same way, God provides the Church, Christ's Bride, to bless the world by sharing about God's plan of salvation through Jesus.

LIFEWISE QUALITY

KINDNESS – Being considerate, generous and compassionate towards others.

HEAD

In Genesis 24:14, Abraham's servant said, "Let the girl to whom I say, 'Please lower your water jug so that I may drink,' and she responds, 'Drink, and I'll water your camels also'—let her be the one you have appointed for your servant Isaac. By this I will know that you have shown kindness to my master." What was the result of this prayer?

How did Rebekah show kindness?

HEART

If we are followers of Christ, we have been called to practice kindness even if it comes at great cost or is seemingly impossible. Ephesians 4:32 says, “Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” When is it difficult to be kind to someone? When is it difficult to forgive someone?

God was considerate, generous and compassionate to Abraham’s servant. In what ways has God shown kindness to you?

HANDS

God demonstrated the ultimate act of kindness by giving up His only Son to save us from our sins. We do not deserve this extreme generosity and compassion. Think of someone in your life who does not deserve your kindness. Show them compassion and generosity by genuinely helping them with something, giving them something or saying something to them.